



# AMERICAN CENTER NEWSLETTER

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**American Center**  
**Colombo**  
**October 2011**

## CONTENTS

### Page 2

- Dr. Bill Visits Sri Lanka
- Children From Gokulam Home

### Page 3

- Prevention of Accidents
- Conservation of Elephants

### Page 4

- Poetry Slam Competition
- Storytelling Program
- Shadows of Change

### Page 5

- Weekend Movie Screenings

### Page 6

- USAID in Action

### Page 7

- Learn About America

### Page 8

- Tuesday Night Movies

## Ambassador Hosts "Learn about America" Essay Winners



Ambassador poses with nine winners

An award ceremony for the winners of the "Learn about America" Eisenhower Essay Competition 2011, conducted by the American Center in Colombo in collaboration with the Eisenhower Fellowship Association of Sri Lanka and the print partnership of the Sunday Observer, was held

on October 14 at the U.S. Ambassador's residence in Colombo. Held for the third consecutive year, the competition paves the way for children to learn about American history and its leaders. This year's theme commemorated the Eisenhower Day of Fellowship which fell on October 14 where participants submitted essays based on the former U. S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower life. The nine winners under the age categories 12-14, 15-16 and 17-18 were awarded certificates and cash prizes totaling to SLR 180,000, provided by the Eisenhower Fellowship Association.

Ambassador Patricia Butenis delivered the welcome speech and presented the awards to the winners. Director of the American Center, Christopher Teal made the introductory remarks whilst the President of the Eisenhower Fellowship Association of Sri Lanka, Mr. Chandra Jayaratne, described the importance of the Essay Competition to children with writing talent.

Continued on page 5

## Upcoming & Current Events . . . . .

### Forever Blues



of Ea Lind.

The Exhibition runs until the November 30, 2011.

Entrance is free!

### Art Exhibition by Ea Lind

The American Center in Colombo is currently holding an art exhibition featuring the work

### November 2, 5:00 pm

Presentation titled 'Photography and New Media for Change' by Sanjana Haththotuwa and Deshan Tennekoon at the American Center Auditorium.

### November 9, 5:30 pm

Public lecture on 'Training for Trusteeship – Be Inspired to Inspire' by Natalie Lampert and Jesse Lee at the American Center Auditorium.

### November 19, 9:00 am

Storytelling program at the American Corner Kandy. Mr. Roger Morley will read from 'Percy Jackson and Olympians: The Lightning Thief.' Movie with the same title will be screened followed by the storytelling.

### November 23, 5:30 pm

Public Lecture on 'Climate Change' by Alex Kahl at the American Center Auditorium.

## The American Center Hosted Dr. William Silcock



Dr. Silcock engages with workshop participant at the American Center

Dr. William Silcock, a professor, researcher and award-winning broadcast journalist visited Sri Lanka and the American Center in Colombo from October 12-17. Popularly known as "Dr. Bill," he delivered a series of effective public lectures and presentations and conducted workshops for television broadcast journalists and journalism students at various media stations and institutes of the country.

Dr. Bill delivered a public lecture on social media and online journalism connected to the American Corner in Jaffna through DVC. His workshops focused on exposing journalists to live television reporting, election reporting and investigative reporting. Dr. Bill visited Rupavahini, the state owned television channel, MTV, Sri Lanka's biggest English news channel and YATV, a channel which focuses on challenges facing the country's youth. He shared his knowledge and 25 years of experience with TV journalists who learned about the future of news and how they could harness social media to improve their knowledge and reach.

Dr. Bill conducted a workshop at the Sri Lanka College of Journalism for students and alumni of the college. He also conducted a workshop at Kelaniya University for students studying for a journalism degree. Dr. Bill's visit also included a trip to the Maldives where he visited TV stations, the Maldives National University and delivered a public lecture on online journalism.

## 'Gokulam Children's Home' Children Visit to the American Center



Children singing a Hindu devotional song

Children from 'Gokulam Children's Home' visited the American Center on Monday, October 17, 2011 on the invitation of U.S. Embassy Colombo. Fifty children aged from 6-19 attended the event accompanied by their principal and teachers. American Center Director Christopher Teal welcomed the children and had an interactive dialogue with them. He briefed them about the resources and services provided by the American Center, and encouraged them to utilize resources to gain wider knowledge, practice English communication and learn about the world outside through books, films and computers.



American center Director Chris Teal with children

As part of cultural exchange, a student gave a talk on the significance of Deepavali (Hindu) Festival in English which was translated into Tamil by another student. A group of children sang Hindu devotional songs in Tamil, followed by another group of young children performing a traditional dance to the delight of all. American Citizen Rafaela Martinez read from the book 'Young People's Letters to the President' and engaged the children in a dialog about the U.S. presidents and how they responded to letters from children and even took their advice.

Chris Teal donated a selection of American journals and books to the children's home.

Continued on page 5

## Educating Sri Lankans on Prevention of Accidents and First Aid



Ms. Pushpa demonstrating first aid techniques to participants

October 20, 2011: Ms. Pushpa R. Zoyza, the Training Coordinator, Disaster Management and Triage Team Leader at the Accident and Emergency Department of the National Hospital, Colombo delivered a public lecture and a

demonstration on "Prevention of Accidents and First Aid" at the American Center Colombo.

The speaker discussed her experience at the National Hospital in Colombo, giving examples of various kinds of accidents that might happen at the home, workplace or on the road. She also made a demonstration using dummies on giving first aid to an unconscious person. The lecture was well attended by health sector employees, volunteers and media. Mrs. Sarah Callinan, Senior Health Official at the U. S. Embassy, Colombo, was among the participants. One of the participants thanked the IRC and the speaker for organizing this "eye-opening" public lecture which was an eye opener for them. The Q&A session was very interactive.

## Presentation on Conservation of Elephants and HEC

The American Center hosted a presentation on 'Conservation of Elephants and Mitigating the Human-Elephant Conflict' on October 24<sup>th</sup> by Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando, Chairman of the Centre for Conservation and Research and a research associate of the Smithsonian Institution. Over fifty participants attended the talk in Colombo, which was linked to Jaffna via digital video conference. The presentation ended with a lively discussion with many expressing interest in creating greater awareness to mitigate human elephant conflict. Human-elephant conflict (HEC) is the main threat to the conservation of elephants in Sri Lanka.

Approximately 50-60 humans and 200-220 elephants die annually because of this conflict. It also results in a significant economic loss to farmers, contributing to rural poverty. Consequently, the human-elephant conflict has become a major conservation, socio-economic and political issue.

For the past fifteen years the Centre of Conservation and Research (CCR) has been conducting research on elephant ecology, behavior



Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando presenting to an attentive audience in Colombo

and the HEC. One of their main tools has been the radio tracking of elephants using GPS-satellite technology. The results of this work, done in collaboration with the DWC, has shown that attempts to restrict elephants to protected areas by elephant drives and capture-translocation fail to mitigate the HEC or conserve elephants. Based on their results, CCR has developed an approach of human-elephant coexistence which will help mitigate HEC effectively and also help conserve elephants.

## American Center Conducts a Poetry Slam Competition



A young poet came from north recites her poem with expressions

On October 27, 2011, American Center Colombo conducted a poetry reading event named 'Open Mic Competitive Poetry Slam' at their auditorium. Number of young poets came down from all over the country recited their poems to the audiences in their own language and style. Five people selected from the audience judged the competition and selected the best performer. The best performer awarded with a certificate and a book as a gift. All performers received free life time membership to American Center Library and American Corners in Kandy and Jaffna.

## Performances by 'Shadows of Change'

American Corner Jaffna showcased a series of performances by *Shadows of Change* at leading schools in Jaffna, including schools in Point Pedro and Chavakachcheri, on October 17, 18 and 19. Over 3000 students from nine schools participated in the program. This outreach program promoted discussions on some of the key social issues in 'liberated Jaffna,' such as teenage pregnancy, alcoholism, drugs and domestic abuse, the Internet and social networking, and the influence of television on Jaffna culture. At the beginning of each performance the principal of each school gave a welcome speech, and AC Coordinator Kirushanthini Jerin introduced a new monthly youth forum at the AC to continue the discussions. Facilitator Sulochana Dissanayake introduced her artists and gave a brief talk on how the production was prepared and the theme of the plays. Immediately after the performance, a lively discussion was held with the students on the issues portrayed. All sessions were translated into Tamil.



Shadows of Change performing 'At a school'

Students and the school authorities welcomed the opportunity for discussing these issues openly.

A public performance was held at the JSAC hall for university students, public and the media which was well attended. The outreach program also consisted of a workshop for over 40 students representing many schools in Jaffna including students of University of Jaffna. The outcome of the workshop was a youth forum which commenced its inaugural meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup> at the America Corner.

## Storytelling, 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'



Kathryn Bondy reads 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' to kids

Beginning in August 2011, American Center Library has begun hosting its "Readers are Leaders" book club for children in collaboration with the Asia Foundation in Sri

Lanka, allowing the Book Club to cater to two age groups: 6-10 years old, and 11-15 year olds. The book club met on Saturday, October 22nd at 2.30 pm as usual. Kathryn Bondy, Vice Consul at the U.S. Embassy Colombo, read from "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" for the older group while Mr. Bill Lynsenmeyer read stories from Reading Street. The storytellers encouraged the children to actively listen by asking engaging questions.

Following the reading club, the film version of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" was screened.

# American Center Newsletter

American Center Newsletter  
October 2011

## Movies for Youth at the American Center

**November 5**  
**3:30 pm**



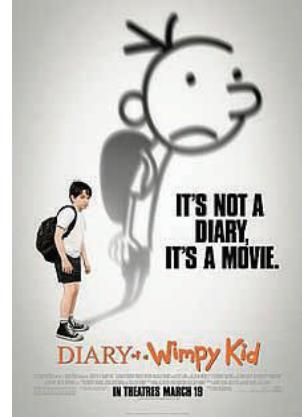
**November 12**  
**3:30 pm**



**November 19**  
**3:30 pm**



**November 26**  
**3:30 pm**



## Ambassador Felicitates Essay Winners

Editor-in-chief of the Sunday Observer Dinesh Weerawansa, Editor of the Junior Observer Mary Anne Perera, parents; other family members, school principals of the winners and members of the

*From page 1*

Eisenhower Fellowship Association of Sri Lanka were present at the event. The winners will feature in the upcoming editions of the Junior Observer.

## 'Gokulam Children's Home' Children

In his closing remarks he thanked the children for visiting the American Center and encouraged them to come again to enhance their learning. The

*From page 2*

children and staff enjoyed the visit and learned much about the resources available for them at the American Center.

## Join EducationUSA's Inaugural Virtual College Fair November 15 and November 17

The inaugural EducationUSA Virtual College Fair will take place during International Education Week this November, featuring over 130 U.S. colleges & universities from more than 11 states across the U.S.!

Each institution will be presenting for approximately 30 minutes during the event in virtual meeting rooms. So, during this 5-hour event there will be 13 different institutions presenting every half hour.

Join live on Tuesday, November 15, from 9am-2pm (EST) and  
Thursday, November 17, from 9pm-2am (EST)

(The time in Sri Lanka would be between 7.30 p.m. – 12.30 a.m.)



[http://www.educationusa.info/conferences/fairs/virtual\\_fair\\_2011/students/](http://www.educationusa.info/conferences/fairs/virtual_fair_2011/students/)

## U.S. Government Supports Transport and Healthcare in the Eastern Province



A USAID official inspects the new incinerator handed over to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital recently.

In support of two important sectors in the Eastern Province – transportation and healthcare – the United States renovated a bus depot in Vakarai, handed over newly refurbished buses to the Sri Lanka Transport Board (SLTB) and provided a new

incinerator to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital. This assistance, provided through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will ease transportation hassles faced by Eastern Province residents, as well as ensure cleaner, safer healthcare for the 360,000 annual patients at the only teaching hospital in the Province.

Complementing the Government of Sri Lanka's investment in infrastructure development, the project also trained SLTB staff in motor repair and mechanics to ensure that the buses remain in good shape. "Vakarai residents can now reach schools, hospitals, courts and have increased access to markets without difficulty," said James Bednar, Director of USAID in Sri Lanka. "And by supporting Batticaloa's healthcare, we hope to improve the quality of life for thousands of families in the surrounding communities."



To help over 1,000 farmer families in the Trincomalee District strengthen their farming activities in the wake of devastating floods early this year, USAID supports the distribution of high quality vegetable seeds. Pictures show the Government Agent/District Secretary of Trincomalee, Major General T.T.R. De Silva, and a local farmer receiving seeds for different vegetable crops. This support is aligned with the Ministry of Economic Development's "Divi Naguma Program," and was implemented in partnership with the Eastern Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.



School cricket teams from the South meet their peers in the East for a friendly game of cricket on International Peace Day. The event, supported by USAID, was attended by some of the most famous Sri Lankan cricket stars and was part of a two day program where youth mingled with the cricket stars, enjoyed stage plays and engaged in community clean-up projects.



USAID Mission Director James Bednar officially hands over a freezer truck to Romesh David, the President of John Keells Logistics. The truck, one of ten provided by the U.S. government, will help farmers in the North and East store and transport their products in cool temperatures to markets throughout the country. Freezer trucks will also reduce crop spoilage and increase the incomes of farmers.



USAID Mission Director James Bednar opens a fruit and vegetable collection center in the Jaffna peninsula and hands over crates, tools and small grants to local farmers. Pictures show local farmers receiving crates from Bednar. The assistance was provided under a partnership between USAID and Cargills (Ceylon) PLC, which aims to improve the productivity and profits of local farmers.

## Monthly Essay Competition



**Learn about America**



### Essay Competition for School Children on the theme of Learn About America

The American Center has organized an essay competition for school children which is published in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer.

The monthly essay topic is for children in three age categories 12-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years.

Each age group is given a monthly topic related to the United States of America and is asked to write an essay with a minimum word count. The students can conduct research for their essay at the American Center Library in Colombo, at American Corners in Kandy and Oluvil, or from sources on IIP Digital, a very good internet resource with information on the United States, its culture, history, literature, politics, tourist attractions and much more.

The first three winners in each age group will be given a selection of American books, a lifetime membership to the American Center Library, and a certificate signed by the U.S. Ambassador. A prize giving ceremony will be held at the American

Center Colombo every two months.

#### Essay topics for September and October are as follows:

In honor of World Heart Day on September 29th this year, the essay topics for September and October 2011 are focused on the theme "A Heart for Life". The deadline for submission of essays is November 15, 2011.

**12-14 years:** Heart diseases or Cardiovascular diseases are the world's largest killers, claiming 17.1 million lives a year. One reason for this is people's lack of commitment to a heart-healthy lifestyle. Your lifestyle is the best defense against heart disease and stroke. Discuss how lifestyle affects heart diseases. (500 words)

**15-16 years:** Although many heart diseases or cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) can be treated or prevented, an estimated 17.1 million people die of CVDs each year. Discuss the role of the health sector, media and the entire community in creating a heart-friendly society. (750 words)

**17-18 years:** "Towards a Tobacco-Free World: Planning Globally, Acting Locally" is the theme for this year's World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH). Explain how youth can take initiative in making this world a tobacco-free, heart-friendly society. (1000 words)

Please see the Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer for more details.



### American Center Photo Contest

November/December 2011

*for school children  
between 12-18 years  
of age*

Submit photographs that demonstrate the theme "A New Day".

Along with the photograph, entries must include a brief explanation of the subject and why it was selected. Please send your photographs along with the coupon given in Junior Observer of the Sunday Observer with your details certified by your school principal or the class teacher to the below address.

#### Photography Competition - November/December 2011

American Center  
44, Galle Road  
Colombo 03

You may send your photograph electronically to the email address amcentersl@state.gov included in the e-mail your Name, Age, Contact Details, School and Name of the School Principal.

**Rules, conditions and more details available in Sunday Observer and**  
<http://srilanka.usembassy.gov>  
**Closing date: January 7, 2012**

# Film Screenings at the American Center

American Center Newsletter  
October 2011

November 2011

## **November 8 - The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985, 84 minutes)**

Woody Allen's charming comedy tells the story of a clumsy waitress who uses movies to escape from her lousy marriage, lousy job, and lousy life. Everything changes when the dashing character in the movie notices her and steps out of the screen into real life. They fall in love, which is a problem because 1) she's married, 2) he isn't real, and 3) the real-life actor who created the character is looking for them. Witty dialogue and great performances by Mia Farrow, Danny Aiello, and Jeff Daniels.

## **November 15 - The New World (2006, 136 minutes)**

Amid the clash of European and Native American cultures following the founding of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, the legendary romance of an English explorer, Captain John Smith, and a beautiful Indian princess, Pocahontas, is transformed into a sweeping exploration of love, loss and discovery, both a celebration and an elegy for the America that was... and the America that was yet to come.

## **November 22 - The Best Years of Our Lives (1946, 172 minutes)**

The story of three servicemen returning home from World War II to the lives and families they left behind: one an Air Force bombardier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, another a seaman who lost his arms in the war, and a third an Army major who has developed alcoholism. Their struggles are balanced by those of their families: wives and children becoming reacquainted with loved ones they don't really know. A big-hearted picture, ambitious and moving but lean and honest, this is one of the most celebrated films of all time, still as compelling as it ever was.

## **November 29 - Pleasantville (1998, 124 minutes)**

Tobey McGuire and Reese Witherspoon star as a brother and sister—she's a rebellious teenager, and he's nostalgic for a past that only ever existed on television. Through mysterious circumstance, they are pulled into the world of his favorite TV show, where everything is perfect, and the siblings learn, as stated by director Gary Ross, "that personal repression gives rise to larger political oppression."

**Movies start promptly at 6:00pm every Tuesday. Seating is limited and is first-come, first-served. Please contact the American Center at [amcentersl@state.gov](mailto:amcentersl@state.gov) or at (11) 249-8146 with any questions. Entrance free !**

